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RANSOM BETHUNE WELCH, D. D., LL. D.

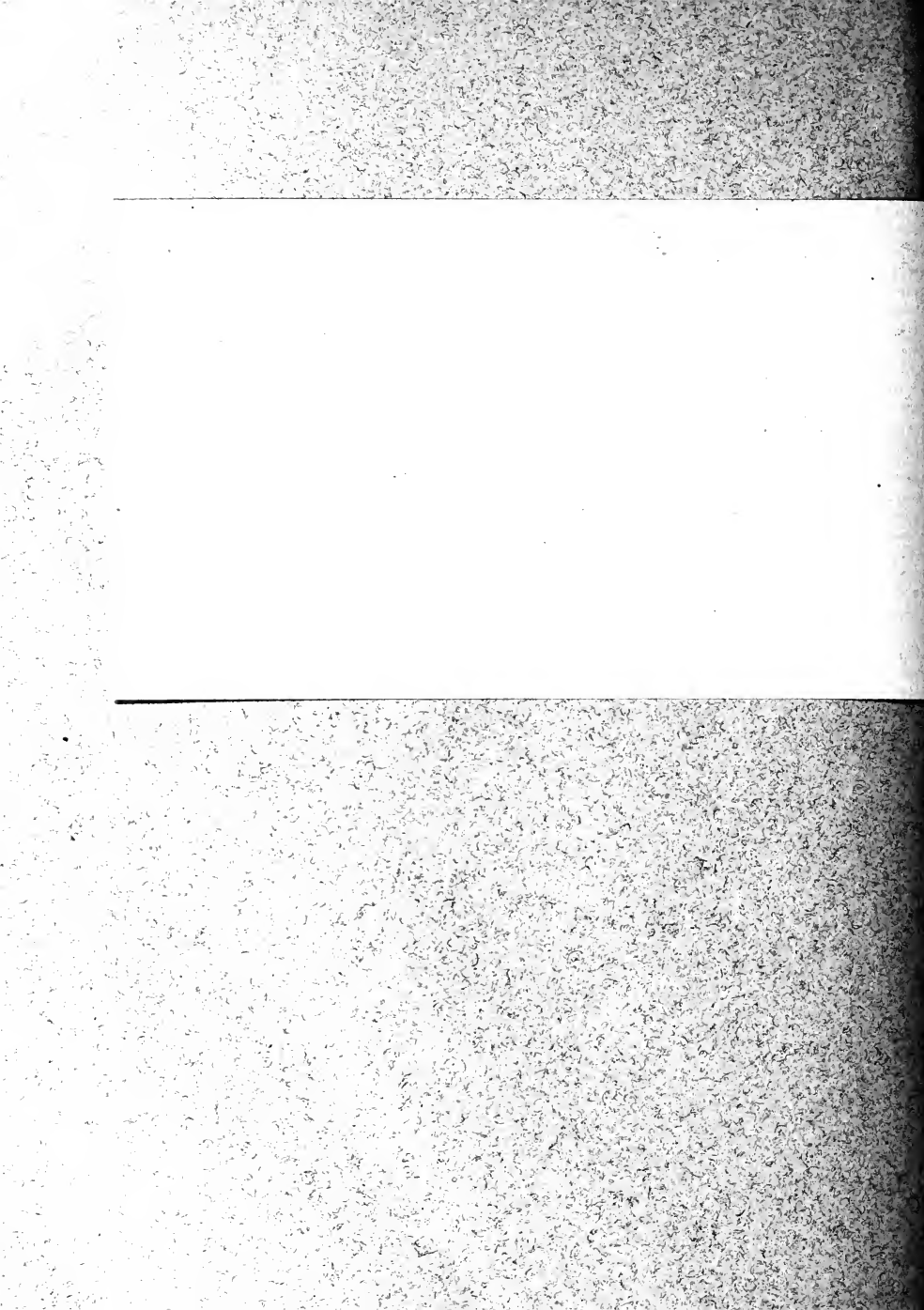
A MEMORIAL.

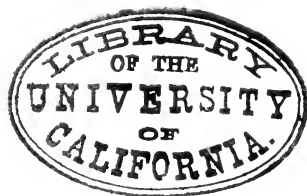


COMPLIMENTS OF THE

AUBURN SEMINARY FACULTY.









Sincerely,

R. B. Welch.

ADDRESSES

IN MEMORY OF

RANSOM BETHUNE WELCH, D. D., LL. D.,

PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

IN

AUBURN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AUBURN, N. Y.

NOVEMBER 11, 1890,

BY

REV. JAMES S. RIGGS, D. D.,

AND

REV. TEUNIS S. HAMLIN, D. D.

AUBURN, N. Y., 1891.

PRESS OF KNAPP, PECK & THOMSON,
AUBURN, N. Y.

*"The lore of Christ and his apostles twelve
He taught; but, first, he followed it himselfe."*



THE MEMORIAL SERVICES.

Professor Welch fell asleep at Healing Springs, Virginia, on the twenty-ninth of June, 1890. The burial was in the Fort Hill cemetery in Auburn, on the second of July. At his late residence and at the grave, there were brief and simple services, conducted by his pastor, with the assistance of the professors in the Seminary and other ministers of Auburn.

On Tuesday evening, the eleventh of November, 1890, memorial services were held in the First Presbyterian Church in Auburn, pursuant to arrangements made by the faculty of the Seminary. These services were in charge of the Rev. William H. Hubbard, the pastor of the church, and Mr. I. V. Flagler, the organist. After the invocation and the singing of a hymn, the Rev. Talbot W. Chambers, D. D., of New York, read a portion of Scripture, and offered prayer. Mrs. Charlotte Robinson Winkler sang "O rest in the Lord!" (from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*).

Professor James S. Riggs, D. D., speaking in behalf of the pupils and the colleagues of Professor Welch in the Seminary, delivered an address. Mrs. Winkler sang James McGranahan's "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." This was followed by the longer address of the evening, by the Rev. Teunis S. Hamlin, D. D., pastor of the Church of the Covenant, Washington, D. C. Afterward, the Rev. A. M. Stowe, a Seminary classmate of Professor Welch, offered prayer, a hymn was sung, and the service closed with the benediction, pronounced by the Rev. John Brainard, D. D., rector of St Peter's Church, Auburn.

IN MEMORY OF DR. WELCH.

ADDRESS BY

PROFESSOR JAMES S. RIGGS, D.D.



ADDRESS.

Because of the double relationship of pupil and colleague, the privilege of saying a few words, in memory of him whom we are glad to honor, has been given to me by my brethren. The picture before me, which I wish to outline for you, is not that which has for its background the large relationship of the church and the world. The more competent pencil of him who succeeds me will give you that. Rather out of that sphere of life in which both as students and teachers we had a common part, come to me now those memories which are inseparable from the kind, familiar face to be seen no more here on earth.

In one's course of preparation for the business of life, that is a time of earnest thoughtfulness and quickening realization, when work begins upon those subjects which lie close to a chosen line of future action. To the student for the ministry this is peculiarly true of Theology. Never to be studied in the cold light of intellectual illumination alone, but always with the reg-

ulative help of spiritual sympathy and insight, it stands as the great central theme of the Seminary curriculum, requiring the best there is within us and all there is mentally within us for its development. Well can I remember the earnest interest with which we gathered as a class for the great study. As I recall these days, and the many earnest talks which since then I have enjoyed with him in his study, three characteristics of Dr. Welch as a teacher stand out before me. The first of these was *his earnestness for the truth*. The great themes of the class-room were always to him vital in their import. The exigencies of the hour often demanded that the outline of their meaning should be given us, but many a time I have seen him turn from his notes and with warmth of feeling and in imaginative vision seek to make the truth stand out before us. His theology was Christ-centred and all aglow with his convictions regarding the justice, mercy and love of God. Peculiarly he loved to dwell upon those unities of thought which gave scope to his imagination. He saw the foe making attack all "along the line" of the Christian defences; the consummation of all things in Christ, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, was often before him. The great

sweep of Paul's triumphant thinking inspired him. He delighted in that which was comprehensive, and, while not so congenial to his mental habits, he was none the less earnest about those teachings which were concerned with details. Every student who has been under him will remember his carefulness about the doctrine of Inspiration and his insistence upon clear and right conceptions of the Atonement. Indeed, the cross as the "symbol of the ages," that emblem of divine love and sacrifice "towering o'er the wrecks of time," suited well his love of ideal unities, and it was often the subject of his spoken thoughts. More and more as I have been permitted to enter into fellowship with him, was the earnestness of his thought and life regarding these high things made manifest. Upon the great sustaining truths of the Gospel his own life securely, serenely rested. No mere desire for large phrase or great-orbed conceptions impelled him. He saw as a man sees who stands upon some height. There he preferred to stand. The measure of his conception was in the reach of his vision—and vision he had, to him inspiring and uplifting.

Out of his earnestness for the truth as he saw it came a second characteristic, and that was *a conserva-*

tive caution. Clearly, sharply drawn in his own thinking, was the line between revealed and speculative truth. In regard to the latter he was exceedingly careful. When a sure word of scripture was not behind him, he was cautiously reticent. I am but bearing witness, I believe, to experience when I say that often a class in theology will rush in where "angels fear to tread." Metaphysical discussions concerning the very throne-room of God are easily in order. Questions which themselves bristle with dispute are made off-hand. Two reasons seem to have shut out the Socratic method from Dr. Welch's classroom—his wish to avoid useless discussion and his earnest desire to place before his students a system of truth in its entirety. Like Dr. Charles Hodge of Princeton, he preferred that way which, if possible, makes one part of a developing system fit into and explain another, and leaves all to the help of reflection. From this cautious attitude he refused to be moved; whatever the judgments of his own thought, he would not be drawn incautiously into definition and defense. Both experience and circumstances, doubtless, convinced him of the ultimate fruitlessness of all merely impulsive discussion. Time was too short, the sub-

ject too great to permit of it. This same careful cautiousness characterized all his utterances upon those questions which are so provocative of differences of opinion. Anything like dialectic fencing was distasteful to him. He himself weighed, measured what he had to say upon difficult and disputed points. He felt the unsafety of any other way of procedure.

In this mere sketch of his prominent characteristics as a teacher, I wish place for one other, and that was *his progressive and charitable spirit*. At first glance this may seem inconsistent with that habitual caution of which I have spoken. It was not so. He was cautiously progressive. He saw and felt, as many have felt with him, that men's thoughts about God and His unchanging purposes are widening. In these enlarging thoughts he caught fresh glimpses of that coming consummation, when in the harmony of the Spirit, all Christendom, forgetting its unessential differences, should seek with one heart-purpose the evangelization of the world. And the realization brought him back with renewed delight to think upon those ideal unities of which I have spoken. I shall not soon forget the last talk I had with him about that

cardinal doctrine of our Confession—election. How little we then knew that he should soon see its meaning from the heights of heaven and join with those who sing the song of the Lamb “slain from the foundation of the world!” I *do* know that that day he magnified once and again the love of God and tried to lift the teaching of “God’s elect” up and away from between the hard and fast lines of heartless logical deduction into the radiant light of the truth of the redeeming love of God. And we all know with what care he labored, in conjunction with one of our honored city pastors, to put into form for Presbyterian consideration his conceptions of the progress of thought beyond the statements of our Confession. His conclusions were not born of haste, nor of mere sentimental considerations; they were based upon a study of the Word, and formed after a wide consideration of the reasoning of others.

Never in all my fellowship with him did I hear him deal in harsh judgments upon others. He had his opinions, as all thinking men are bound to have. If ever he chose to express them, and this was not often, it was with no bitterness, generally with some charitable apology for what seemed amiss.

Such he was as a teacher. The lectures are over ; the voice is silent, but the memories of him will go on with us all, "till we meet again."

A group of six men is not very large. With painful emphasis came the message of life's brevity and uncertainty, as our fellow-laborer was called away. We had rejoiced for his sake that the end of the year was near, that he might have change of scene and freedom from care. How gloriously, after all, both came to him. Not among the mountains or by the sea, not in quietude of mind about the problems of life, nor in the rest of a tired, suffering body, but amid the scenes that no finite thought can picture ; in rest eternal !

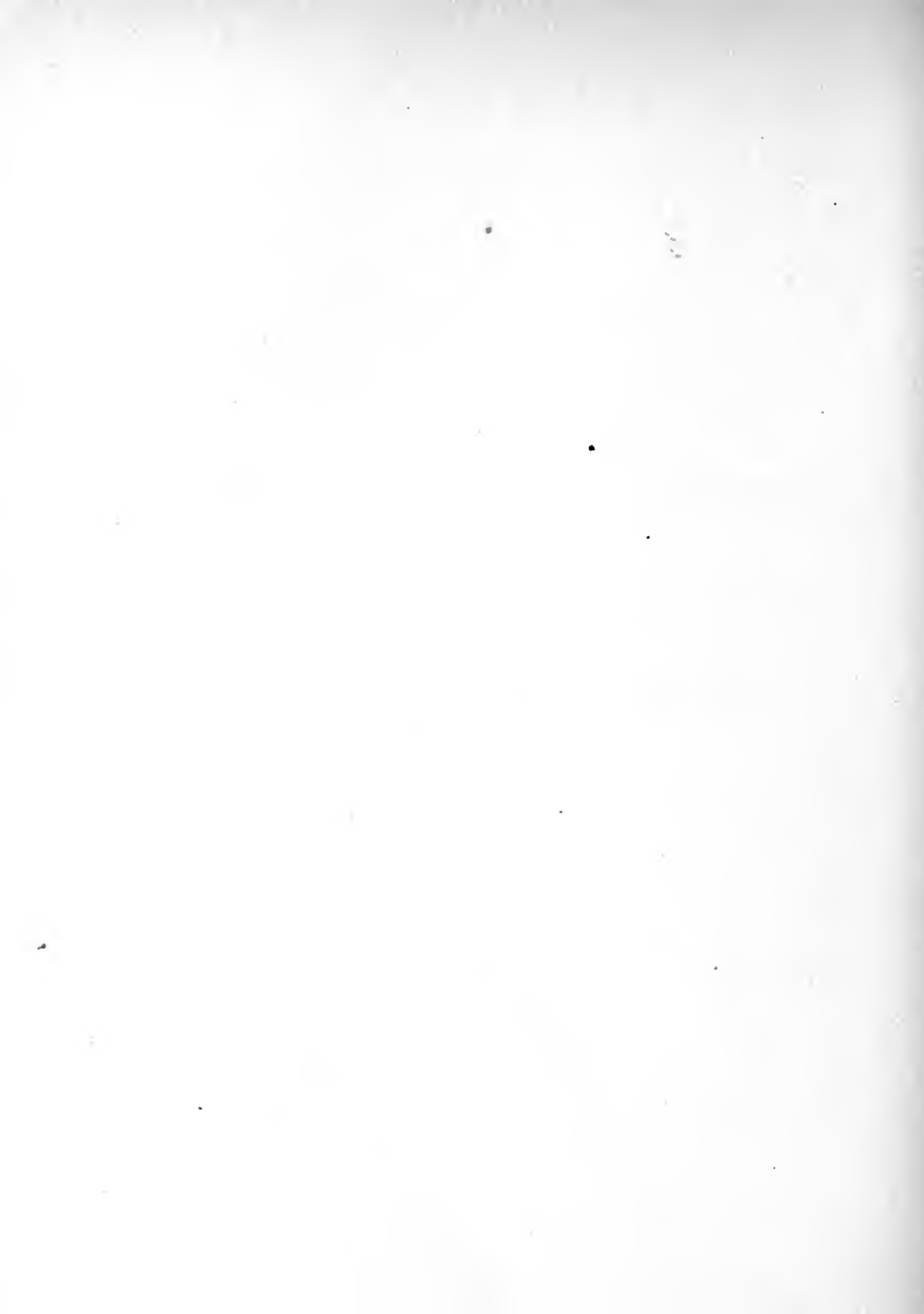
When some years ago my face was first turned toward Auburn as a student, this word was given me : you will find Dr. Welch a man of reserved, rather formal manners, but beneath all he has a warm heart. May I now bear witness to the abundant truth of all this. From first to last he was my friend—warm-hearted and sincere. The reserve of which I have spoken and which was not easy for him to put away, prevented many from really knowing him. It placed

an undefinable barrier about him, and I cannot but feel that he lost something by reason of it, for sympathy is so full of blessings both to him who gives it and to him who receives it. To any of you, then, who came no nearer to him than that felt boundary would permit, let me tell you of his brave, sympathetic, cordial heart, which revealed itself to me more than once, in helpful counsel and cordial kindness ; and I am only one of those who knew him. His love for the Seminary needs no word of confirmation. As coming classes shall meet in ampler rooms for work, and have the help of greater facilities for the accomplishment of their desires, his name again shall be repeated and the measure of his affection gained anew.

It was not until after he was gone that we knew of the weary hours of agonizing pain that attended upon nearly every effort that he made ; but, as I remember the cheerful face, the uncomplaining fortitude, the indomitable fidelity, which kept him in our midst working, counseling, enduring, till the close of the year, all other sweet memories of him are but strengthened and beautified.

And now we gather here, with the night shadows about us, to *remember* him. Our memory touches

upon the scenes which were only as the threshold of life to him, for while I remember him as amid those, I think of him now exulting in the surpassing realities, whose dim reflection in the words of truth so often inspired him; glad with the gladness of heaven, going on, and on, and on, to know the Lord and the countless wonders of His grace.



RANSOM BETHUNE WELCH.

ADDRESS BY

THE REV. TEUNIS S. HAMLIN, D. D.



ADDRESS.

A gentleman of singular polish and courtesy ; a scholar of wide and accurate research ; a teacher whose clearness and frankness won, and whose thoroughness stimulated every pupil ; a preacher of gentle, though logical and persuasive eloquence ; a writer of lucid and vigorous style ; a theologian of views as broad as they were sound and Scriptural ; a friend always thoughtful, self-denying and steadfast ; a man of affairs, keenly alive to every social and public interest ; a Christian that impressed every observer as living each hour very near his Lord ;—such was Ransom Bethune Welch. To trace the development of his life and character, and to sketch his multifarious labors, is the delightful duty with which you have been pleased to honor me. I thank you for the privilege of laying my offering of undying love upon his grave, here among his colleagues and pupils, and the numberless neighbors and friends that knew and admired him, and that cherish his memory as a precious heritage.

Dr. Welch was born on the 27th of January, 1824, in the town of Greenville, in Greene county, New York. He was of Holland blood. His father, John Welch, was a farmer ; handsome, of refined manners, and of marked religious character. His mother, Hannah Van Etten, was a model of thrift and piety. From such parents have sprung the vast majority of our eminent scholars, statesmen, merchants, inventors, authors ; who have made the American name respected throughout the world.

Ransom was the youngest of fifteen children, all honest, industrious and moral, though not all secured a liberal education ; all of whom lived to have families of their own, but of whom only one survives. His early years were spent on the farm, and attending the district school, an institution now too little esteemed, but which has awakened in many a man a thirst for knowledge, and started him on the road to greatness. It did this, and something more, for him ; for his first distinct religious impressions came through the daily Bible-reading and prayer of his devout teacher, Thankful Smith. He never doubted that in these early days he fully gave his heart to Christ.

His parents were members of the Christian Church ;

in which on the 15th of July, 1836, at twelve and one-half years of age, Ransom was baptized by immersion. He was at once, as always, an outspoken, active, aggressive disciple. A life-long friend says : "A prayer that I heard him offer when he was about fourteen years old, wrought in me the first conviction that I needed repentance and forgiveness."

He was always fond of study, and quickly won and steadily maintained a reputation for being at the head of his classes. He was thorough in everything, never passing a point until he understood it, shunning nothing because it was difficult. This high grade of scholarship brought him admiration ; his beauty, his gentleness, his refinement, his humor, brought him love ; and he was a general favorite throughout the community.

From boyhood he made his own way in the world. His chief income came from teaching country schools. Before he was sixteen he went into a district where many of his pupils were older and larger than himself, and where his frailty totally unfitted him to meet the inevitable bullies of such a school on their own ground of force. But he met them on his ground of tact and gentleness and patience and love ; and speedily was

master of the situation, and achieved complete success. The amount of money thus earned was very small; and it was supplemented only by \$60, for which sum he sold his interest in a legacy left him by an uncle. But the cost of living in rural places was then very moderate; he had no expensive habits; and was neither afraid nor ashamed of rigid economy. He pursued a thorough preparatory course at the Gallupville and Greenville academies, leading his classes in all studies, despite the frequent and serious interruptions of teaching.

In 1844, at the age of twenty, he entered the junior class at Union College, where he at once and constantly signalized himself by scholarship and character. A college classmate¹ writes of him as "an industrious and conscientious student; a genial, unselfish and loved companion; an unostentatious and noble Christian young man."

Near the close of this college year Prof. Alonzo Potter, afterward Bishop of Pennsylvania, testified to his "high standing as a scholar and unexceptionable character as a Christian."² The next year President

¹ The Hon. John T. Wentworth, Racine, Wis.

² July 17, 1845.

Nott pronounced him of "unblemished moral and religious character, and well qualified to take charge of an academy."¹ These testimonials were given to aid him in finding teaching for self-support. He was graduated in 1846, in a class of 106 members; one of twenty-six that had an equally high standing,² another being the Hon. Henry R. Pierson, late Chancellor of the University of the State of New York. He was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

For two years he continued the work of teaching, first, as principal of the Academy at Red Hook, New York; afterward, at the Academy at Jonesville, New York, then a very prosperous school. His salary here was, for the first term, \$30 a month and poor board; subsequently \$40.

Meanwhile he had been reading widely and thinking deeply upon religious themes, with the result of gradually drifting away from the Unitarian bias of his childhood, and becoming a thoroughly-grounded Trinitarian. The views thus formed by independent research were of course peculiarly clear; and he never ceased to feel that this experience enabled him

¹ Feb. 20, 1846.

² All were marked 500+, according to the system then in use.

to help young men who were passing through similar seasons of painful doubt and questioning.

He had long had the ministry in view as his life-work; and in the autumn of 1848 he went to New York city, intending to enter the Union Theological Seminary. His earnestness and promptness in all religious duty are shown by the fact that he at once joined the Bleeker Street Church, of which Dr. Erskine Mason was then pastor, and took a Bible-class in its Sunday school. Even at this early age of twenty-four, his bent was distinctly toward theology, as distinguished from the other Seminary studies; and the great fame of Prof. Park attracted him to Andover. After getting that splendid teacher's system in the junior and middle years, the same passion for this chief of the sciences brought him to Auburn to sit at the feet of Dr. Laurens P. Hickok. Here he repeated the middle year, and took the senior.

What a rare training in theology, to have full courses under two such men as Park and Hickok! Of the former's magnificent abilities and unique fascination as a teacher I know only what all the world knows. But of the latter's majestic simplicity of character, profound moral earnestness, child-like faith,

self-denying unworldliness, burning devotion to Christ; of his depth of philosophical insight, his logical acumen, his herculean grasp of the greatest problems of human thought, and his masterful elucidation of them; I can speak with the loving gratitude of a reverent pupil. It would be hard to name two men that have produced a deeper impress than have these on the metaphysics, the ethics and the theology of this and the preceding generation.

Mr. Welch's class in this Seminary, that of 1852, was a very remarkable one. All of its thirty members have honored their profession and their Alma Mater. There have been among them eminent pastors, such as Dr. Robert R. Booth, of New York; executive officers, as secretary N. G. Clark, of the American Board; college presidents, as Dr. Park S. Donelson, of the Ohio Wesleyan Female College, and Dr. Julius H. Seelye of Amherst; professors in theological seminaries, as Dr. Herrick of Bangor, Dr. Morris of Lane and Dr. Welch of Auburn. And many of these men have duplicated the honors they have nobly won; president Seelye having served brilliantly for four years in congress, and Dr. Morris having been moderator of the General Assembly;

while of the sixteen clerical members of the Assembly's committee to revise the Confession of Faith, two, Drs. Morris and Booth, are of this class. It is a notable fact that when the chair of theology here became vacant by the resignation of Dr. Hall, five members of the class of 1852 were deemed worthy of the succession to which Dr. Welch was finally appointed. Dr. James Eells, professor in Lane Seminary and moderator of General Assembly, Dr. John Bascom, long president of the University of Wisconsin, and Dr. F. F. Ellinwood, secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, were fellow students with him in the Seminary, though not classmates.

At the close of his middle year here, he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Onondaga, in session at Salina, June 12, 1851. He preached frequently as was, and is, the wise custom of students ; supplying for some time the church at Jordan. In January, 1853, he was called to what is now the Congregational Church of Oswego, then the Second Presbyterian. He entered upon the work ; but the lake winds proved too severe for his weak lungs, and he declined to be installed.

Very delicate health induced him to make, in 1853 and 1854, a tour on horseback through the south, especially Mississippi, as a colporteur of the American Tract Society. His sales of books were unprecedented; and he was urged to continue in the work. But as soon as he had gained sufficient health, he was eager to be again in the pulpit, to which he felt himself unmistakably called of God. He was even able to say with Paul, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." Accordingly he accepted a call to the Reformed (Dutch) Church of Gilboa, N. Y., and was ordained and installed Jan. 9, 1855, by the Classis of Schoharie. He at once took rank as a preacher of such power and attractiveness that people drove many miles to attend his services. A revival soon began that brought some sixty persons to confess their faith in Christ.

From Gilboa he was called to Catskill, and installed over the large and influential Reformed (Dutch) Church on the 17th of April, 1856. His first work here was the removal of a long-standing debt of some \$3,500, toward which he gave \$100, one-tenth of his yearly salary, besides personally securing most of the subscriptions.

He found the church in a very cold and back-slidden condition. Only one member of it would pray in public. He felt that such a state of things, unless corrected, would kill him ; and he at once threw himself into unstinted labors for a revival of religion. His preaching on the Lord's day was heart-searching and tenderly appealing. He held services during the week in the five rural neighborhoods of the parish where Sunday Schools were maintained. He conducted cottage prayer-meetings, and social meetings for counsel and instruction. He visited almost night and day from house to house. He succeeded in setting many idle Christians at work. Soon God's Spirit was graciously poured out, and a powerful revival spread, not only through his own congregation, but through the entire community. One hundred and thirty-seven persons confessed Christ in Mr. Welch's church alone ; and no subsequent communion season passed without accessions to the church from the world.

During these arduous labors, the pastor employed no evangelist, or other clerical helper. And this as a matter of deliberate choice. I have heard him say that he believed a pastor should do his own evangelizing work just as far as possible, since no other man

can so well know the needs of his people and how to supply them.

It was at this time that he learned an experimental lesson, invaluable to him and to every minister of Christ. He was much worn by incessant labors. The week had been full of interruptions. Sunday morning found him illy prepared for the pulpit. He said to the relative,¹ from whom I get these facts: "I walked across the bridge, and up the hill to the church, feeling sorely depressed, and saying to myself, 'There is nothing in the sermon worth uttering. How can I face the congregation with the poor, half-digested thoughts that it contains? O Lord, if any good is done today, Thou, and not I, must do it!'" In such conscious humiliation, and with an earnest appeal to the Holy Spirit to help his infirmities, and make good his deficiencies, he entered the pulpit. He was not conscious of any marked uplifting of his downcast soul. At the close of the service he hastened to the privacy of his room that he might abase himself before the Lord as an unprofitable servant. He had no expectation of ever hearing anything good in connection with that poor sermon. But during the same

¹Rev. John W. Teal, D. D., Elizabeth, N. J.

week a young man, who had been awakened by it came to Mr. Welch to ask what he must do to be saved; and at least half of those that became Christians during that revival traced their first desire and purpose to that sermon.

During those three years at Catskill Mr. Welch was emphatically a pastor, proving his complete fitness, in everything except physical strength, for that most practical and exacting sphere of ministerial labor. One of his parishioners¹ at that time, writes: "He had a faculty for setting his people to work, and there was no resisting his loving urgency. His sermons and prayers were full of the marrow of the Gospel. He was active and industrious, neglecting no one that required his services. The only pain he ever gave us was when he resigned his place as our pastor."

This resignation was due solely to ill health. While conducting a cottage prayer-meeting he was seized with violent hemorrhage from the lungs. The church granted him protracted leave of absence; but it soon became evident that he could not resume his duties; and on the 25th of May, 1859, the Consistory reluctantly accepted his reiterated resignation.

¹ Mr. Wm. H. VanOrden, Catskill, N. Y.

A few weeks later he was able to cross the ocean ; and the next ten and a half months, July 2, 1859 to May 19, 1860, were spent in traveling in Europe, Egypt and Palestine. He was well equipped to get the most from such a tour ; and that he did so, his delightful letters to the New York *Herald*, the *Tribune*, the *Christian Intelligencer*, the *Independent*, the *Observer*, the *Evangelist*, and other papers, abundantly testified.

On his return he received calls from churches in Paterson, N. J., and Owego and Albion, N. Y. He accepted the latter, believing, or at least hoping, that he was now strong enough to endure pastoral labor. But a very few months proved the contrary, and, to the great regret of his people, who had already become tenderly attached to him, he resigned.

On the 5th of June, 1861, Mr. Welch was married to Miss Lydia G. Kennedy of Clifton Park, N. Y. Of the beautiful and happy family life thus begun I may not speak in detail. Nor is it necessary among those that have witnessed it, and have enjoyed that cordial, refined, Christian hospitality whose charm owed no less to the native tact, delicate thoughtfulness and sparkling conversation of the devoted wife

than to the elegant courtesy, acute observation, wide learning and ready wit of the tender husband.

The next five years were spent at Clifton Park, by no means in idleness, for Mr. Welch read constantly and in many lines; travelled much in this country; and wrote numerous letters and articles for newspapers, magazines and quarterlies. But the main business of this period was to regain health, and this he did slowly but surely.

In 1866, upon the election of his classmate, professor N. G. Clark, as secretary of the American Board, Mr. Welch succeeded him as professor of Logic, Rhetoric and English Literature in Union College. I was then a junior at that institution, and vividly remember with what intense interest we scanned the face of the new professor the first morning he appeared at chapel. He bore the scrutiny well. His remarkably handsome, cultured face; his erect, soldierly bearing; his melodious, carefully trained voice; his dignified but perfectly cordial manners; at once won all hearts. And closer acquaintance only confirmed first impressions. No teacher could be more fair and kind, while never lowering the standard of requirement. His department imme-

diately evidenced his power, and subsequent commencements were notable for the very high order of the rhetorical and elocutionary work of the students.

One of his college pupils¹ says: "He gave me some of the best, most lasting impressions of my life. He had great skill in laying hold of crude young men; kindling in them high ambition; firing them with earnest belief that their dreams of success might, by perseverance, be realized. I always admired the equipoise of the man, the even balance of his abilities and attainments. To the Christian spirit he added the ready tact which comes only from large experience with the world; and the social refinement to produce which travel, literature, companionship with cultured circles,—all must blend. I knew him as the accomplished teacher of belles-lettres; accurate, elegant; raising the ideals of his classes; making us appreciate how broad, varied, comprehensive, should be the education of the Christian scholar."

Another,² who was his pupil here also, writes: "I shall never forget the afternoon when he came to

¹ Rev. Horace C. Stanton, Ph. D., Albany, N. Y.

² Rev. Newton L. Reed, Olean, N. Y.

my room in college to invite to his house one of the crudest country boys that ever aspired to a degree. And that evening at his home was my first glimpse of that Christian refinement and social power so potent in his contact with men."

Another:¹ "That I should have named one of my sons after him is but a slight evidence of the reverence, the appreciation, the love, I felt toward him."

And still another:² "He seemed almost like a father to me. I shall never forget his interest in me, and the great kindness he always showed me. I feel that all I am, and all the success I may have had, is due to him. I should like to prove myself not wholly unworthy of his great regard and loving thought for me."

His ten years at Schenectady witnessed sad troubles in the college, that brought deep grief to his gentle and peace-loving heart. They also overloaded him with labors. After president Hickok's retirement in 1868, professor Welch taught metaphysics, and part of the time political economy. When he had gone, the work that he had done unaided and without com-

¹ Prof. John G. Lansing, D. D., New Brunswick, N. J.

² Rev. George Fairlee, Troy, N. Y.

plaint had to be divided among several instructors. But he found time for much literary labor. In 1865-7, the *Methodist Quarterly Review* published four elaborate articles from his pen, on "The Greek Church." In 1874, the *American Church Review* had a notable article on "Periods of Transition in English History." In 1876, he was one of the centennial preachers for the Reformed (Dutch) Church, his theme being "The Hereditary Interest" of that Church "in all forms of Education." He was an active member of the University Convocation of this state, before which he read the profound paper on "The Modern Theory of Forces," that was the germ of his book, "Faith and Modern Thought." This volume was published early in 1876, with an appreciative preface by Dr. Tayler Lewis, whose name sheds such splendid lustre, not only on Union College, but on American scholarship. Dr. Hickok pronounced Dr. Welch's treatment of his theme, "original and vigorous." Prof. Benjamin N. Martin of the University of the City of New York, wrote: "I am much struck with the completeness of your exhibition of the force philosophy, as presented by the physical writers. You have left none of them unexplored, or unappreciated."

His labors were widely recognized. In 1868, Rutgers College and the New York University, each conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity; and in 1872, Maryville College that of Doctor of Laws.

In the autumn of 1876 there came to him, unsought and unexpected, the call to the chair of Richards and Hickok and Hall. To those that best knew both Auburn and Dr. Welch, the fitness seemed ideal. "His theological position was rather that of the consensus of the creeds of the Reformed churches, than that of the Westminster standards taken by themselves."¹ He was a loyal, liberal Calvinist. He aimed at a Christo-centric theology. He profoundly revered the Holy Scriptures, and said in his masterly inaugural:² "Our theology must be constructed, not from philosophy and science, but from divine revelation." I personally know how strongly the title³ of this chair attracted him. Becoming a theologian did not unmake him as an exegete. He had a well-defined philosophy, but no one would ever

¹ Prof. W. J. Beecher, in Pres. & Ref'd. Review, Oct. 1890, p. 661.

² Oct. 3, 1877.

³ "Christian Theology," as distinguished from "Dogmatics," or "Systematic Theology," or "Didactic Theology."

suspect him of twisting the Bible into conformity to it, or of defending it by isolated proof texts, falsely so called. Entirely conversant with the past, he did not make it a fetich ; nor imagine that the last word had been spoken by the fathers, the schoolmen, or even the reformers. His face was toward the east ; and no one could conceive his glorying in the thought that no new idea in theology could be promulgated in Auburn while he filled this honored chair. The pastorate was the work he most loved ; its spirit never left him ; and he taught a preachable, workable, evangelizing Christian theology, as only one that has been a practical pastor can do. He accepted the place with his whole heart ; and so in all respects, he fitted into the historic niche of Auburn to a nicety.

Dr. Henry A. Nelson, in his address of welcome said : “ We have no doubt that, with daily study and daily prayer, you will, with ever increasing ability teach Christian theology, the theology of the Christian Scriptures. We have no fear that such study and prayer will discover any serious disagreement between the Scriptures and our Westminster symbols ; but we put no restraint upon your endeavor to ascertain whether there is not more of theology in the Bible

than those symbols have stated, and whether aught that is therein stated can be stated more clearly, more intelligibly, more available for the instruction of God's people and their children. To such faithful endeavor a fair construction of your inaugural vow pledges you."

He began his work here with the beginning of the year 1877; and, as at Union College, immediately won the hearts of his pupils. He never treated doubts harshly or trivially. He asked no young man to accept his *ipse dixit*. He aimed to set every one to thinking, and so to develop his best personality. He never forgot that his errand was to train up, not professional theologians, but preachers and pastors for the living church. He subordinated scholarship to Christian discipleship, according to his own maxim that "character is much more to be desired than gifts." One of his pupils,¹ now a missionary at Teheran, Persia, wrote, a few days² after hearing of Dr. Welch's death: "Christ was his great theme. Many times during these last three or four days, I have gone back to the old class-room in the old

¹ Rev. Lewis F. Esselstyn.

² Aug. 13, 1890.

chapel building, and listened again to him as he gradually warmed to his subject, waxed eloquent, and lost himself and us in his theme so entirely that we all forgot when the hour expired." Such teaching is safe from the reproach often aimed at our seminaries, that they are detrimental, or even fatal, to vital piety. Dr. Welch was first and foremost a fervent Christian; and no philosophizing or theologizing could obscure this in the eyes of his pupils. He taught grandly with his noble equipment of logical acumen, pellucid expression, varied and thorough scholarship; he taught more grandly still by his steadfast faith, his unfailing patience, his transparent sincerity, his deep human sympathy, and above all, his passionate devotion to Christ.

The coming to Auburn involved new ecclesiastical relations. He had been twenty-three years in the ministry of the Reformed (Dutch) church; and had comparatively small acquaintance in Presbyterian clerical circles. But he fell easily into his new environment. He was not an ecclesiastic, either by taste or knowledge, or training; but he was a faithful presbyter, doing his duty conscientiously in this relation as in every other. In the denomination at large

the challenge of his position was tremendous ; he must stand beside such men as Morris at Cincinnati, Patton at Chicago, the Hodges at Princeton, Shedd and Henry B. Smith in New York. The estimate and welcome of the Board of Commissioners of this Seminary, were ratified by the Presbyterian church, and by the Christian church generally. Responsibilities and honors came quite as fast as he could meet them. In 1881 he became one of the editors of the *Presbyterian Review*, and continued in the same relation to its successor, the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*. He represented our church as delegate to the Presbyterian Alliance in 1884 at Belfast, and in 1888 at London. At the former he read, by appointment, a paper on ministerial duty. He was a member of the General Assembly's committee to revise the proof texts of the Confession of Faith, and of its committee of conference on the organic unity of the Christian church. In all these positions he honored himself and those that trusted him.

But the denominational limits of even so great a church as ours could not confine his activity and usefulness. He contributed largely to the *Independent*, and other weekly journals ; to the *Princeton Review*

and the *Homiletic Review*, to the *Old and New Testament Student*, and to other magazines. He was a member of the Victoria Institute, and one of the most active men in the American Institute of Christian Philosophy, a number of important papers that he read before it being subsequently published in *Christian Thought*. He was a delegate to the World's Convention of Young Men's Christian Associations at Berlin in 1884, and to the World's Missionary Conference at London in 1888. Everywhere he readily took a foremost place, not by self-assertion, which was totally alien to his nature, but by genuine and quickly recognized merit and fidelity.

During all these years of abounding professional and literary labors, he was never for an hour a mere book-worm and recluse. He was thoroughly *en rapport* with his age. Politics, social problems, all reforms, he studied, sympathized with, and as far as possible shared in. I shall never forget his high discourse on national themes, as, one year ago this very day, we stood together before yonder statue of Seward, whose name has made your beautiful city famous throughout the world, and were thrilled anew by that great statesman's sublime appeal from even the con-

stitution of his country to the "higher law." How Dr. Welch's eye kindled; how his form became, if possible, more erect; how his voice deepened and quivered; how his soul shone out through its too frail tabernacle; only those can appreciate that have enjoyed the rare privilege of being with him in such moments of inspiration. He was eminently a Christian patriot.

And he always kept his heart in warm contact with the living church, and the active working world; not an easy thing to do in the philosophical atmosphere and scholarly seclusion of a theological professorship. To the limit of his strength, and beyond it, he preached in the surrounding churches, and at your noble neighboring University of Cornell—as cheerfully in the smallest village as in the largest city, and always with great acceptance. He addressed temperance meetings, and Young Men's Christian Association anniversaries, Bible society and missionary gatherings. He voiced your grief when Garfield fell by the bullet of an assassin. He spoke for this Seminary at the Centennial Assembly at Philadelphia, and nobly vindicated its historic position as to Christian doctrine. He stood for substantial revision of the Westminster

Confession of Faith ; and with his co-presbyter, Dr. Sprague, did a great work in showing how this can be accomplished along the lines of the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. In the noblest sense, he was a man of affairs, sensitive to the best thought of his day, and well abreast of every forward movement for man and for Christ.

These multifarious activities were not those of a robust man, of sound health, in whom overflowing vitality is an imperative summons to labor. He had a feeble constitution, and never knew what it is to be perfectly well. He worked all his life against the great odds of constant need of care and almost constant suffering. This meant loss of time and opportunity that he deeply deplored. But, despite all, his industry was prodigious. He acquired readily, but did not write easily. Every important letter was first committed to paper in pencil, and then copied. His reviews, essays, sermons, were carefully revised and re-written. He jotted down thoughts on scraps of paper, which became the material for his most elaborate articles. He practiced what he taught his pupils, that whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well. Having accomplished what he did in

the face of early poverty and life-long infirmity, he believed there is no limit of possibilities for the majority of young men ; and it was by this practical faith that he stimulated so many of his pupils to noble ambition and self-sacrificing living.

“ A clergyman’s virtues consist not in singularities. All Christian excellence is in great and substantial duties ; in the doctrines of faith cordially embraced and applied ; in the love of God ; in charity to man ; in temperance, in integrity, in humility ; in the control of the appetites and desires ; in prayer and other exercises of piety ; in the fixed love and admiration of heavenly things.”¹ If this is a true ideal for the minister of Christ, Dr. Welch realized it to a singular degree. He knew how to live as a true man among men. A member² of one of the leading firms in this city, writes : “ Our business relations for a number of years have been exceedingly pleasant. His confidence in us, his cheerful smile and conversation when in our office, can not be forgotten. I can honestly say that in all our business experience, we never met more of a gentleman, more of a man.”

¹ John Davidson, quoted by Cardinal Newman, *Essays*, Vol. II, p. 394 ; Lickering, London, 1871.

² Mr. Fred H. Fay.

Such plain but sterling business virtues are commonly thought to be all too rare in clergymen. Yet, he was emphatically a heavenly-minded man. "He was as true in his loyalty to the good and the right he was courteous and kind."¹ He was genuinely humble. Flattering attentions at home and abroad, multiplied scholastic and ecclesiastical honors, left no stain upon his beautiful simplicity. Pain never soured the sweetness of his disposition. Disappointments never made him misanthropic. He took no pleasure in searching for evil in his fellow-men, but found a deep joy in discovering good that others had overlooked. His keen wit was never caustic. His sharp arrows of repartee were never poisoned. Petty jealousies and rivalries he hated with godly hatred. After a familiar friendship of many years, I can not recall one word of his I would wish unsaid, one act I would wish undone.

Nor did the charm come only with long acquaintance ; it was immediate. "No one could know professor Welch even casually, without loving him. Sweet in temper as a woman ; guileless as a child ; mighty against all unrighteousness ; theologically, I

¹ Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler.

think of him somewhat as I do of St. John the divine ; he went down very deep toward the underlying fundamentals, and he soared high toward the throne."¹ A most estimable lady,² whose guest he was in London in 1888, writes : " We never had any one stopping with us that we liked so much, or that seemed to us such a model of a Christian gentleman, in the highest sense. He was so gentle and loving, kind and humble, and yet so bright and cheerful always ; and how unwilling to give any trouble ! His prayers were so beautiful that we could not help feeling he lived very close to the dear Saviour." That from an acquaintance of a few days, and this from a classmate and life-long friend :³ " He was to me the very type of the Christian scholar ; of rich, sweet spirit ; the soul of courtesy ; generous in all his thought and sentiment ; ever loyal to Christ and his truth."

Another writes :⁴ " Something over two years ago, it was my privilege to cross the Atlantic on the same steamer with Professor and Mrs. Welch, and also to see

¹ Rev. John Gordon, D. D., Omaha, Neb.

² Mrs. Galbraith.

³ Dr. N. G. Clark.

⁴ Dr. F. F. Ellinwood.

much of him in the Missionary Conference and the meeting of the Presbyterian Alliance, both of which he attended, in the city of London. In our promenades upon the deck of the steamer, at the table in the dining saloon, on the floor of the Conference and the Alliance meeting, in the many little gatherings of a social nature connected with these great occasions, I had opportunity to see many sides of Dr. Welch's character, and I found that, as with a true diamond, from whatever angle I contemplated him, there was always to be seen the same central light of truth. He stands in my memory as a model of the Christian gentleman and the cultivated Christian scholar. In London, he received the hospitality of some of the most distinguished of all those who entertained the members of the Missionary Conference, and it was a satisfaction to us to know that America was so well represented in those highest and yet most Christian circles, whose good opinion of our countrymen our national pride led us to value most."

Surely it must have been a singularly consistent and symmetrical Christian character that could make such an impression at the very first, and maintain and deepen it through the varied tests of many years.

Dr. Welch's life-long habit of enduring pain with Christian fortitude stood him in good stead during his last year on earth. He believed that he was in the relentless grasp of a mortal disease ; almost daily in his prayers at family worship, he alluded to it. A less brave man would have faltered. A less devoted disciple of Christ would have laid down his work. He did neither. So uncomplainingly and patiently that his students, and neighbors, and even his near friends, knew nothing of his condition, he taught his classes as usual ; was always in his place at their devotional meetings ; kept up his large correspondence ; reviewed many books ; wrote for the reviews ; maintained the reputation of his home for ungrudging and cordial hospitality. If any man ever fulfilled Dr. Roswell D. Hitchcock's counsel to one of his classes, it was Dr. Welch : " At whatever cost, accept the service offered you, high or low, far or near. Then burn to the socket." ¹

But when the last Seminary year closed, he knew that the flame was flickering low. He accepted cheerfully his Master's will. He felt as Mr. Bancroft, the illustrious historian of the United States, wrote to a

¹ Eternal Atonement, p. 165.

friend in 1882 : " I was trained to look upon life here as a season for labor. Being more than four score years old, I know the time for my release will soon come. Conscious of being near the shore of eternity, I await, without impatience and without dread, the beckoning of the hand that will summon me to rest."¹ Dr. Welch had not Mr. Bancroft's comfort of knowing that he had finished man's allotted time on earth ; he was in his 67th year, when many men are still almost in their prime. Nor was his resignation the cover of morbid disgust with life, or cowardly shrinking from its burdens. He longed to live. In a well-worn volume of Tennyson that he carried, these lines, among others, are marked :

" Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
 " No life that breaths with human breath
 " Has ever truly longed for death.

" 'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant ;
 " O, life, not death, for which we pant ;
 " More life and fuller that I want."

And so he did what he could to get well again. Faithfully attended by his devoted wife, he set out

¹ To S. Austin Allibone, Decoration Day, 1882.

for the Hot Springs of Virginia. He tarried with us a few too brief days at the Capital. We were told of his illness—not by himself; but he was so bright and brave we could not help believing that love exaggerated the peril. There was no abatement of his interest in public affairs. He was as anxious as ever to see and meet great and good men. An interview between him and General Fremont was something never to be forgotten. His prayers in the household were “as ointment poured forth.” Never had his faith seemed more serene; his friendships more precious; his love to God and man more profound; his vision of Heaven more unclouded.

At the Hot Springs he grew rapidly worse, and a change was made to the Healing Springs. Alas, they were wrongly named, for him. When told that the end was near, he accepted the message as calmly as if it had been a permit to go to his Auburn home. Then came days of patient waiting and of exquisite suffering. “You are going,” said his wife, “where there is no more pain.” He cried: “I am glad it is so; O, I am glad it is so!” On one of the last days she asked, “What shall I read aloud?” “Read from the 14th chapter of John.” When she reached the

queries of Thomas and Philip, he said : " Ah, there questions arise ; let us dismiss them, and dwell only on the promises. As I become weaker, I realize more and more that Jesus is not only kind and gracious and loving, but that he is also a strong Savior. There is a divine side of upholding strength, and I sink my own weakness into His almightiness." " Do you regret leaving home ?" " No." " Would you not have been more comfortable there ?" More comfortable ? Yes. But ' comfortable ' is not the word, you know. We have followed the best of advice. Our life is given us to make the most of, and we have tried to do this. The end must come at last ; and having acted according to the best of our knowledge, we should have no regrets." And so, with faith unclouded, and fortitude unexhausted, on Sunday morning, the 29th of June, 1890, at half past six, he fell asleep.

Amid all the beautiful characteristics of his Christian life, these predominated : a profound conviction of sin and an intense love for his Savior. In his last days of agony, he used often to exclaim : " What a dreadful thing sin must be to bring such suffering as this !" He returned from many an evening walk

sadly depressed in spirit because he saw so many human beings apparently going to destruction. "He longed inexpressibly to see the Christ. And sometimes, when his soul was lifted in prayer, it seemed as if the vision was vouchsafed him. But it was not the Christ child that appeared to him, as to St. Christopher, and St. Anthony of Padua; it was rather the risen Christ, still bearing the wound-prints in his hands and feet and side. It was the risen Savior, who having made atonement for sin, and having triumphed over death, now came with this cheering message, 'Fear not; for I have redeemed thee; thou art mine.'"¹ And now at last he sees Him face to face, where "there shall be no more death; neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain."

Dr. Welch had an intense love for his home and all its surroundings. He loved his pastor, this church, this city and all its people. It is at his own desire that his ashes repose in your beautiful Fort Hill cemetery. And he loved his colleagues and his students. He not only gave to Auburn Seminary his ripest years and powers in ungrudging service, but

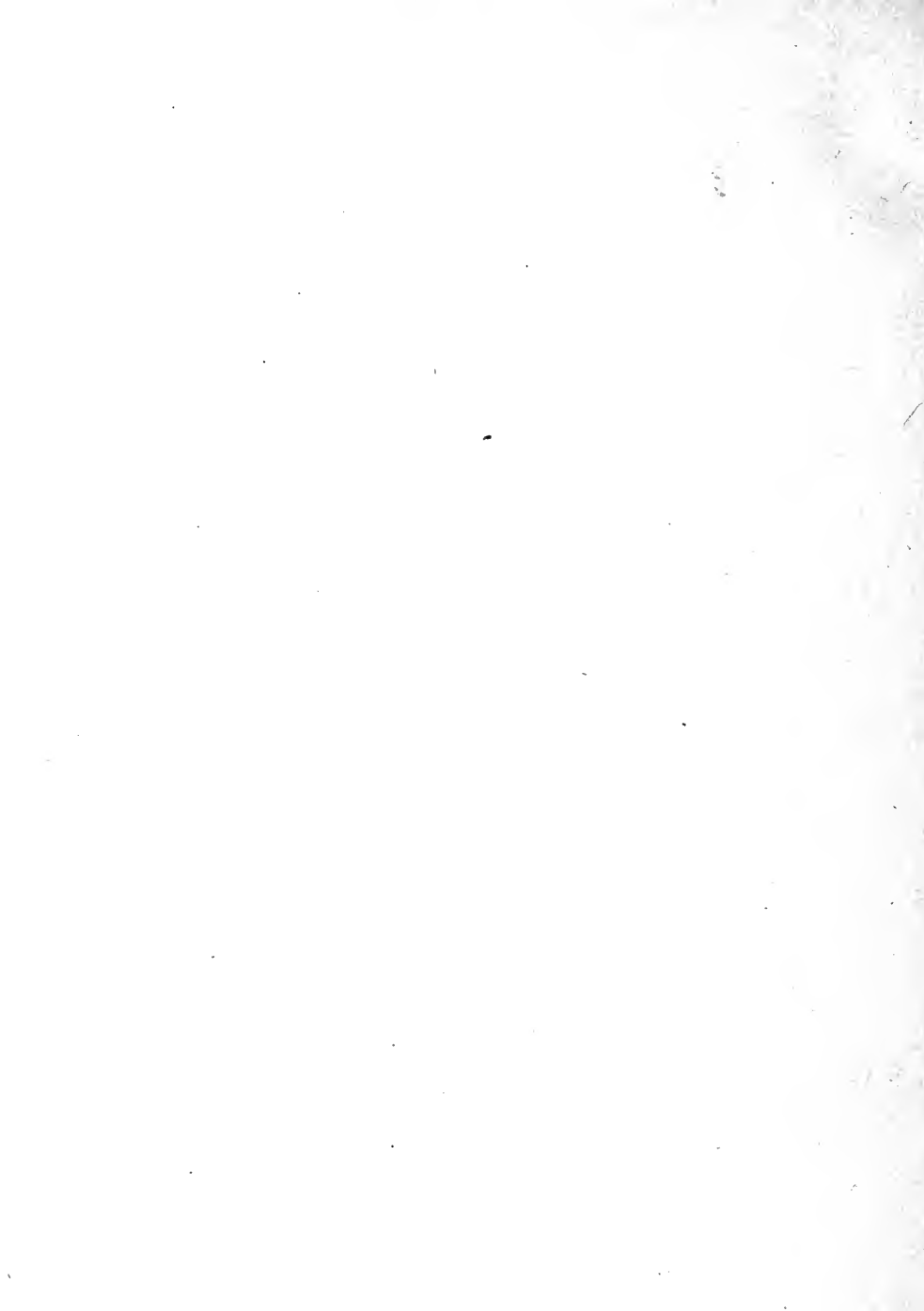
¹ Mrs. Welch.

he left the munificent bequest of \$36,000 to enlarge its usefulness. "This was not the gift of a rich man, from his abundance. It was not the result of a fortunate speculation, or of an unforeseen advance in the value of property. It was simply the savings of a careful, economical, self-denying, hard-working, honest man, whose income was never so small that he did not put aside a part of it."¹ With his fondness for travel, for good books, for works of art; his adaptation by natural bent and by cultivation for luxurious living; it would have been easy for him to spend this sum, and much more, in the mere gratification of refined tastes; a self-indulgence that most men would readily have found reasons to justify to their consciences. His gift thus means more than economy; more than ordinary generosity; it means the habitual dominance of a sanctified will over his entire manner of life. When the building thus provided for shall stand beside those erected by other generous friends of sacred learning, may it speak to teachers and pupils and citizens, of something more enduring than its own granite, the love of God and of man that never faileth; the love that burned so

¹ Mrs. Welch.

brightly in that heart that has ceased to beat on earth, in that life that is now blossoming and fruiting in heaven.

Diligent student ; tender pastor ; skillful teacher ; good citizen ; kind neighbor ; faithful friend ; conscientious steward ; devoted husband ; humble, devout, zealous, consistent Christian, glorified saint, "until the day break and the shadows flee away," hail and farewell !



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